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ABSTRACT

The second of three documents on Project PRISM, a program designed to help middle school classroom teachers provide for the needs of gifted and talented students without removing them from the mainstream, notes guidelines for parents. The following topics are addressed (sample subtopics in parentheses): characteristics of the gifted (common myths and facts, early signs of giftedness): ways in which parents can help (the influence of parental attitudes on the child's behavior, guidelines, what the gifted child needs from parents, ways to encourage productive and creative thinking, information on enrichment experiences, and ways to identify creativity): parent-school partnership (questions and answers on special classes, counseling, career awareness): and resources for parents. (CL)

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PROJECT M—S

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A SUPPORT MODEL FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

PARENT INFORMATION

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Dear Parents,

The Project PRISM staff realizes the responsibility and challenge you have as parents of gifted and talented children and has developed this booklet for you.

The booklet is divided into four sections. The first contains general information about characteristics of gifted children. The second section includes suggestions for creating a stimulating atmosphere in your home for your gifted child. The third section focuses on program options that could help meet your child's educational needs. The last section contains a list of additional resources you may find interesting and helpful as the parent of a gifted child.

We hope that the information in this booklet will help you better understand and support your gifted child.

Sincerely yours,

Maryellen

Maryellen Cunnion

Andrea

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MC:mm

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I

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED

"THE BOSS SAYS IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER BATCH OF GIFTED"

COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Prepared by: State Superintendent's Advisory Committee
for the Education of the Gifted and
Talented - Wisconsin

MYTH	FACT
1. Gifted children are weak and unhealthy.	1. Gifted children actually tend to be stronger, have fewer illnesses, and equal or exceed other children in height and weight. Many are outstanding athletes.
2. The gifted child is an oddball.	2. Teachers often fail to identify gifted children because they seem so normal. Studies show gifted people are highly stable. Only a small number of them ever spend time in mental institutions.
3. The gifted child is a bookworm, wears glasses, and does not participate in normal children's activities.	3. Most gifted children are good readers but they engage in many types of activities and have many interests. Some may actually need remedial help in reading.
4. Gifted children are enthusiastic about school and academic work.	4. Many gifted children are enthusiastic about school, others are bored and are found among dropouts.
5. Gifted children usually are from upper, middle class, professional families.	5. Gifted children occur in about the same numbers in all socioeconomic groups.
6. Most gifted children are failures in their adult life--the "ripen early and rot early" theory.	6. Research indicates that outstanding success is achieved by most gifted individuals if they have been identified and their giftedness has been nurtured.
7. All gifted children are social misfits.	7. Gifted children enjoy social situations, talk readily, and know a great deal about many topics. They are often good mixers and assume more than their share of social leadership in school and out.

MYTH	FACT
8. The play interests and activities of gifted children are different from those of normal children.	8. Although gifted children may prefer more complicated and challenging games, their play interests are usually the same as those of normal age mates.
9. Gifted children are likely to be egotistical and snobbish.	9. Most gifted children possess desirable personality characteristics.
0. Gifted children with the same IQ's have the same kind of abilities and interests.	10. Pupils with the same abilities differ widely as each pupil's pattern of abilities and talents is unique. Therefore, differences make it difficult, if not impossible, to put the gifted in homogeneous groups.
1. Gifted children often fail to adjust socially in college as they have been accelerated in elementary and secondary schools.	11. Unless acceleration is excessive most gifted children make very good social adjustments in college.

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RESTRICTIONS

Is your child extra bright?

Reprinted from *Changing Times*, The Kiplinger Magazine

GUIDEPOSTS

FOR PARENTS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

IF YOUR CHILD IS GIFTED...*

"I know my child is gifted," said one wise parent, "but he is first of all a child." This parent recognized the child's need for play and outdoor exercise, for creative activities, and for relationships with other children, as well as for intellectual opportunities. Emotional development takes time; the gifted child often progresses more slowly in emotional than in intellectual development. In mechanical things too the gifted child may become impatient with his relatively slower progress, although he may be average or even superior in eye-hand coordination as compared with other children. The wise parent recognizes that a bright child has emotional, social, and physical needs, just as other children do; he is concerned with all the interrelated aspects of his child's development.

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD IS GIFTED?

From his very early years the truly gifted child may give indications of superior ability--in memory, in al ertness, in "insatiable curiosity," in the ability to put two and two together, in precocity in learning to walk and to talk, in early interest in words and reading. The gifted child is usually physically well-developed and socially responsive. He can amuse himself and persist in an activity longer than the average child of his age.

There are exceptions, of course. Early deprivation of affection and attention may prevent a child from developing intellectually. Health conditions may prevent him from learning to walk early, or from relating himself happily to other people. Sometimes it takes expert study to detect a gifted child. Intelligence is not given once and for all at birth; it develops in response to stimuli in the environment and within the individual.

Under favorable conditions, the gifted child learns readily at school. In almost half the cases, gifted children learn to read a short time before they enter school. The parents do not formally teach them to read; they read stories to them, tell them words they want to know, and provide preschool books for them to look at. If the parents would tell the child's first teacher about his reading interests, there would be less danger of his becoming bored and disillusioned as a result of being given books that are unrewarding because they are too easy for him. In other subjects too the gifted child learns quickly, sees relations, develops superior language ability, solves practical problems as well as dealing effectively with abstract ideas. But no parent or teacher would expect a child to be perpetually active intellectually any more than they would expect a physically competent child to do nothing but show off his physical prowess.

WHAT PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GIFTED CHILD?

The child's experiences during infancy and early childhood may determine whether an inherited high quality of mind and body is brought to fruition or is prevented from developing. The difference may be owing to conditions in the physical and psychological environment, early child-care practices, or emotional relations.

Like other children, the gifted child needs his parents' loving care. In infancy he is totally dependent upon them. The interpersonal relations in the home have a most important influence on his personality development. This does not mean the parents should be completely permissive, or blind to the child's shortcomings. The child who knows no restrictions, who is required to make all his own choices, tends to become anxious and insecure. All children need reasonable but firm limitations to protect them against their destructive impulses and to strengthen their inner controls.

A parental concern with "whoness" rather than "whatness," as the late Dr. James Plant expressed it, is closely related to the loving care mentioned above. Some parents seem to be concerned primarily with their child's achievement--they are anxious that the child be a credit to them and increase their prestige. They embarrass him by boasting about his achievements, and thereby alienate him from his friends. Some gifted children sense that they are not loved for themselves, and resent this, sometimes even to the extent of failing in school. In extreme cases, parents have exploited a gifted child, forced him to practice long hours, exhibited him, and otherwise failed to consider his total development.

Some parents seem jealous of their gifted child. They "can't take" his superiority to them; it makes them feel inferior. In a few instances parents may actually feel hostile toward the child, often for reasons which neither they nor he can understand.

Other parents seem indifferent to their gifted children. These are usually parents who do not appreciate the importance of education and feel that "what was good enough for them is good enough for their children." They do not realize that their child may be quite different from them. They do not expect enough of him, and discourage his intellectual interests. Some parents restrict their child's natural eagerness to learn because they are afraid it will "overtax his mind" or make him "high hat."

A favorable home environment is one in which there is basic affection for the child, which expresses itself in efforts to meet his needs, but not in excessive permissiveness. In such a home, the child is protected from unlimited freedom to do as he pleases, as well as from a restrictive, authoritarian, autocratic atmosphere. The child has freedom to explore, to experiment, to read widely, to have friends, to enjoy adult visitors to the home. He has many outlets for his normal intellectual interests, but is not pushed or prodded or coached. The child who is over-pressured by his parents may defeat their aims by resisting learning which would ordinarily come naturally to him.

Inside the Mind of a Brilliant Child

Author: Hochman, Gloria

Family Weekly, November 14, 1976

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Pages 6 and 7

II

PARENTS CAN HELP

"IT IS BY IMITATING THEM, RATHER THAN FROM THEIR TELLING ME WHAT TO DO, THAT I'VE DEVELOPED A PASSION FOR LEARNING AND A COMPULSION TO WORK IN AN ORGANIZED MANNER. BUT I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR LOVE AND AFFECTION, MY PARENTS GAVE ME THE SELF-ESTEEM WHICH IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN CONSTRUCTIVE THINKING."

A GIFTED
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

What if Your Child is Gifted? (By Knowing the Indicators, Parents Can Spot Special Talents in Their Youngsters and, By Taking a Few Simple Steps, Can Start the Process of Bringing These Gifts to Flower)

Author: Sisk, Dorothy A.

American Education, October 1977

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Pages 9, 10, 11, and 12

ON BEING GIFTED - STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

National Student Symposium on the
Education of Gifted and Talented
American Assn. for Gifted Children, 1977

In a special symposium, gifted students shared their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the contributing factors and significant people who influenced their commitment to learning.

Many of the students commended their parents for having offered a good balance of guidance and support. Others, retrospectively wished that certain conditions had not been present. However, all acknowledged the great important place their families held in the development of their talents.

Here are some of the comments:

On Not Pushing

"They didn't refuse to help when I asked but did not offer to help me go beyond what I needed to know."

"They hindered me at times by often expecting too much of me. By being perfectionists, my parents made me feel inadequate and frustrated if I was not constantly performing at my best."

My Goals/Their Goals

"My parents encouraged high goals, yet they were sympathetic if goals I set were not realized."

Opening Up Opportunities

"How did my parents help me grow? They attempted and still give me all the possible opportunities for development."

About Responsibility to Yourself

"Though I realized learning was a thrill, I suppressed the yearning or transformed it, in some cases even degraded it in order to be accepted by peers. Consequently, frivolities won over."

Just You and Me--Problems of Being Gifted

"They've heard of me but they don't know me in person, they've read the reviews and think that they've read the book."

How's Your Love Life

"You can always catch up socially, but if a talent is dormant too long, it may deteriorate."

Cultural Exposure

"How have my parents helped in my growth and development? They exposed me to different cultural activities, to many kinds of people and situations. They gave me a home with books, music, movies and the like; they stressed academics."

On Values - Pro

"It is by imitating them, rather than from their telling me what to do, that I've developed a passion for learning and a compulsion to work in an organized manner. But I strongly believe that because of their love and affection, my parents gave me the self-esteem which is an essential element in constructive thinking."

The Artist's Agent

Kids go through some very difficult times in their early teens and that seems to be a crucial turning point. They are often offended when their parents interfere. To many "gifted and talented" students, privacy is a prized possession, and if they are deprived of it, they can become irritable and moody.

As a parent, I would try to create an atmosphere where my children were as unscheduled as possible, where they could have time of their own. Exposure to books, theatre, special classes, cultural events,--many things--should be available to them as often as possible.

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO DO THINGS A LITTLE EARLIER, A LITTLE BETTER, A LITTLE FASTER, AND MAYBE A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY FROM MOST OTHER CHILDREN.....

1. He is a child first and gifted second. A five year old may be able to solve mathematical problems worth bragging about to the grandparents, but he has only lived five years. Only behavior appropriate for a five year old should be expected of him.

2. Don't compare your gifted child with other children. That places on the gifted one the responsibility to live up to that image all the time, and it certainly is no fun for whoever comes off second best. All children are unique and special in their very own ways.

3. Listen to your gifted child. Dinner may be about to burn, and the telephone ringing, but LISTEN, because the question may be important. If ignored, the curiosity to ask may disappear. The one thing we can all give our children is our undivided attention...at least most of the time.

4. It is a great big wonderful world. Show it to your gifted child in the form of trips, books, interesting people, digs, symphonies, fire stations, museums, wiggely things, theater, daisy chains, and the magical chemistry that makes a cake rise.

5. Let her specialize early if she wants to. There are fringe benefits to living with dinosaurs; they may be learning to do research, knowing how to keep notes and records, and discovering the Dewey Decimal System together with Tyrannosaurus Rex.

6. Children don't have to be gainfully employed every waking minute. There should be time to daydream, to be silly and do baby things, and to lie on an unmade bed to contemplate the ceiling. Gifted children are usually creative children, and it is difficult to be creative on schedule.

7. Praise your gifted child for his efforts. Praise him for the wonderful things he does, and if his great experiment does not work out as hoped, praise him for trying. Inquiring minds must take intellectual risks, and risk taking needs to be encouraged and supported.

8. Discipline is necessary for harmonious family life and comes in the same shape for all brothers and sisters - whether gifted, curly headed or slowpoke. Giftedness is no excuse for unacceptable behavior.

9. Education is expensive. Start saving now.

10. Don't expect your gifted child to live up to your unfulfilled aspirations. You may dream of "my son, the doctor", but he may have other heroes.

11. Let her do for herself what she says she can, because she probably knows. If her judgment is faulty, that is learning, too. Gifted children are future leaders who thrive on early responsibility.

12. You cannot expect your perceptive gifted child to develop a high sense of morality if you cheat on your income tax. Would George Washington lie?

13. Encourage originality. Help them do their own thing and praise them for producing "the only one in the whole world" even if you don't know which end to paste "up" on the refrigerator. Develop pride in original and creative work.

14. Remember that the fine line between encouraging and pushing may make the difference between a happy and productive youngster and an unfulfilled underachieving child.

15. Help them with their study skills. Help them plan not only their school work but also their own projects and responsibilities at home and in the community.

16. Realize that there are times to reach out a helping hand and times to get out of the way. Knowing the difference makes you a very gifted parent.

17. Be a welcome person in your child's school. You probably cannot go to the competition anyway - there isn't any! Support your school's efforts to do its best to meet your child's special needs and demonstrate your genuine interest in quality education for <u>all</u> children.

18. Parents of gifted children are people too. They need help and guidance in understanding and appreciating the special needs of their gifted children without feeling inferior or jealous. Hostile feelings may lead to over-protection, domination, or exploitation.

19. Enjoy! Of all the problems children have, giftedness surely is the best one. Gifted children are curious, enthusiastic, excited about new things, and able to communicate early. Take vitamins for stamina - and enjoy!

Submitted with tender, loving care for all children and my best wishes for happy "gifted" parenthood - Gina Ginsberg, Gifted Child Society, Inc.

WHAT THE GIFTED CHILD NEEDS FROM PARENTS

Parents may be concerned about the fact that the child has high intellectual ability and special skills. How do you deal with this fact? They may need to discuss the importance of natural love and acceptance of the child as a child; the importance of avoiding any connotation through labels or manners which imply that he is set apart, special or different.

Knowledge of the child's ability is necessary to the adults who deal with him in planning proper experiences for him. Such knowledge is harmful to the child and to gifted children in general only when it is used by adults, either parents or teachers, to bring status to themselves. Such status efforts involve value judgments placed upon gifted children by adults who communicate that their child is gifted, with the implication that: (1) the child is superior; (2) that other children possess less value; and that (3) through osmosis the adults associated with him are likewise superior.

1. Acceptance - parents must accept their child as a gifted child. As a child he must be accepted for his own sake and not because he brings his parents prestige by his achievements.

2. Parents need to help the gifted child accept himself. Usually he is well aware that he achieves in a superior fashion to his age mates in some areas. It is frustrating and discouraging to try to make him believe that he is mediocre. The gifted child should be encouraged to recognize and accept his assets and limitations.

3. Parents need to help their gifted child to win acceptance from others without sacrificing his individuality or ruining his special attributes through an enforced conformity which spells mediocrity. Parents tend to over-emphasize conformity and to teach the child to play down his special gifts so that he may be popular with his peer group.

4. Parents need to understand, too, that some of the problems that sometimes disturb the gifted..problems of loneliness, of being different from others, of concern over destiny and death, of their intellectual development being out of step with their emotional and social development, of frustration in school work, and in the school situation. Frequent open discussion of their questions with a mature adult is helpful to them.

5. Parents need to take time to discuss, stimulate and to listen. They also need to take time to interact with the child as a child. Relax and enjoy it.

FROM: State Department of Education, California Association of School Psychologists

HOW MAY PARENTS HELP?

Is every child creative?

Research shows us that every child is born with creative potential. Infants demonstrate spontaneous expression and social reaction. Very young children are imaginative and are masters at solving problems. They are able to attack their world with vigor to find out more about it. In the first few years of life, a child learns the most information, makes the greatest strides in language growth, and shows more evidence of creativity than at any other equivalent time span. There is a definite downward trend in creative behavior as the child grows older.

While there is some correlation between high I.Q. and creative ability, it should be emphasized that every child is a creative personality, with tremendous potential, able to demonstrate creative behavior.

How can I begin to look for multi-talented activities in pre-school children?

Learn to watch and observe your child. Check these....

1. How does he act at play when playing alone?
2. How does he act at play when playing with others?
3. How does he relate to family members?
4. Listen as he discusses what he sees or relates his ability to observe.
5. How does he use the things in his world?
6. Listen as he asks questions and attempts to evaluate and understand his environment.
7. How is he able to assume responsibility for his own behavior?
8. Does he relate to the needs of others in the family?
9. Can he accept and fulfill responsibilities?
10. Does he finish what he starts?

Can parents encourage development of the senses?

Again, the sharing of experiences is the key. Listen to music of many kinds. Evaluate paintings. Enjoy a sunset. Listen to the wind. Together, take time to listen, to see, to touch, and to talk.

Provide materials for experimentation in graphic arts. Provide different kinds of blank paper, crayons, paints and colored chalk.

Visit music and dance concerts, art shows, home shows or fairs.

Evaluate and express your likes and allow and encourage your children to do the same without fear of censure.

And, above all, respect the work of a child. Give his/her efforts praise and dignify those he/she thinks are best by displaying them

in your home. A special bulletin board in the family room or the child's room is often useful for student work displays.

What are some of the things you as parents can do at home to help build children's communication skills?

Try some of the following communication activities with your children.

1. Let your children describe things. Some suggestions might be his room, his friend, his pet, his family or his home.
2. Give your children directions from one place to another; see if they can follow them.
3. Ask them to give directions and follow them.
4. Encourage your child to describe how he'd feel if he were a snowflake, a big league ball player, a tire on his bicycle, and a present.
5. With your child, describe something in nature....the cloud formation in the sky, the moon peeking through the trees, a flower, and the smells in the canyon or smells at the beach. Look for cloud pictures together.
6. Describe how a certain song made you feel or what it made you think about.
7. Discuss together likenesses and differences of houses or cars, animals, advertising or food. Describe each one in detail.
8. Describe something beautiful you saw.
9. Look at leaves on the plants. See how they are alike or different. Talk about them together. You might make a collection.
10. Discuss occupations as to their benefits and undesirable qualities.
11. Train yourself to respond to your children's emotional expressions. Say, "You look angry or happy or sad or discouraged." Talk about feelings.
12. Let children know how you feel. Let them know when you feel "angry, discouraged, happy, or excited."
13. Discuss the news together.
14. Talk about family and family goals and needs.
15. Make up new titles for songs or stories.
16. Ask children to express the one thing they remember most about their vacation last year.
17. Read together stories about people in other lands. Read the news articles about other countries and find out more about the people who live there.
18. Ask children to write their own news article about something important that happened to the family.
19. Tell what the dog is saying when he wags his tail or barks.
20. Keep a collection of creative writing and put it in a keepsake book.
21. Make collections together.

How can parents encourage forecasting?

Here are some activities that would help you train your children to be better forecasters. Use these as suggestions and add ideas of your own.

1. Ask children what will happen if they fight at the table.
2. Discuss what would happen if on one ever put his/her things away.
3. What will happen if we get a new pet?
4. What would happen if we never listened to each other?
5. What would we need to do if our car broke down?
6. What would happen if no one ever picked up the garbage?
7. What would the world be like if there were no insects?
8. What would happen if the power went off? What if the water supply were interrupted?
9. Tell all of the ways in which you are a special person. What are all of the things that make you an important part of the family?
10. Discuss family fire drills. How could we escape?
11. Help your child decide how much money he needs for a special activity.
12. Discuss how other people feel when excluded from something or when treated differently because their race or religion is different.

How would you define productive thinking?

Productive thinking is a method of thinking which sorts and selects ideas and information. This includes convergent thinking, divergent thinking and evaluation. It is a method of dealing with all life situations and all problem solving. Divergent thinking is thinking out, looking for many possibilities. Convergent thinking is thinking in, looking for the best solution for you in your situation. Evaluation is always needed. Evaluate the good and the bad and build your next approach on what you have learned.

How can you encourage productive thinking at home?

Encourage productive thinking by allowing children to have ideas and opinions. You know children. They are natural productive thinkers when encouraged. Help your children to explore ideas, possibilities, and alternatives. But remember, your child needs to know that you respect his/her ideas.

Sometimes adult experience and direction must dictate what your child needs to do. This does not build productive thinking, but productive thinking is not always demanded. Above all, be consistent.

Can you really help your children to use divergent thinking, convergent thinking, and evaluative thinking at home?

Of course you can! Encourage curiosity and questions. The process of productive thinking involves freeing your mind, looking at all possibilities, diverging and exploring ideas. Now converge, and evaluate. Pool your ideas together and select the possibility for you in your time and place.

What are some examples of divergent thinking:

Some examples of divergent thinking are....

1. Tell all things that are red; let family members take turns.
2. Think of all the ways a common household object might be used.
3. How many ways or routes could we travel from here to there?
4. How many places could we go on vacation?
5. What are all the things you could buy with a dime?
6. While riding in a car, ask family members to list animals, words, things to eat starting with the letter C.

What are some examples on convergent thinking?

Some examples of convergent thinking are....

1. Encourage your child to select a news article to take to school.
2. Place items into categories. Categorizing is a convergent skill. Some things you might do are:
   a. sort toys
   b. arrange cupboards
   c. arrange cupboards
3. Permit your child to tell you the directions for going to the store, to church, to another's home, and then follow his directions.
4. Encourage your child to tell someone in the family how to do something.
5. Encourage your child to tell a friend how to find his house or his school.

What are some examples of evaluative thinking?

Some examples of evaluative thinking are....

1. As a family, list all the reasons for our living where we do.
2. Discuss the success or failure of a family outing.
3. Discuss different news reports. Which report should one believe?

4. Discuss controversial issues.
5. Discuss reasons for and reactions to home decorating or planning.

What do we mean by including judgment as part of the decision making process?

Judgment is partly conscience and conscience is important. Our culture and our background dictates our values. These values are important to decision making. Wisdom or common sense enters into the definition of judgment. Wisdom, the knowledge of what will be best for this situation and the people involved, is important to the decision making process. Involved here is a consideration of feelings and needs. Both are needed if the most appropriate decisions are to be made.

Why is evaluation important to decision making?

Evaluation is important because it helps us to consider possibilities and probabilities before rendering a decision. A trained decision maker may seem to reach snap decisions, but he really must evaluate much data before making a decision. When children are helped to evaluate past information and future goals, they are able to make better decisions. Good decisions teach success. Success builds self-confidence in people.

What decision making activities could be done at home?

Here are some decision making activities you would use to help your children develop this talent....

DISCUSS AND MAKE DECISIONS AS A FAMILY:

1. Decide where to go on a family outing.
2. Decide how to deal with work responsibilities of of family members.
3. Decide how to deal with family problems.
4. Decide on ways we can help each other
5. Decide which television program the family will watch together.
6. Decide which books or movies to share.

RESPECT AND EVALUATE INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS:

1. Let your child decide what he wants to wear.
2. Let your child set up and work out a study schedule.
3. Let your child decide how to arrange his room or his play area.
4. Help your child make decisions concerning his future goals.
5. Let children help to decide year planning or home decorating when they can.

6. Let children have a choice in decorating their own rooms.
7. Let your children help to decide what will be included in a meal.
8. Let your children decide how to share family equipment or space.

What will happen if your family tries to focus family activities so that different talents are required?

The family will begin to see each family member as a uniquely talented person. The way others see us affects the way we see ourselves. As each person's talents and special abilities are recognized and rewarded, each person will grow in self-esteem and self-worth.

To provide a place to grow as an individual of importance is the prime goal of each family!

Courtesy of Pinellas County, Florida

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP?

Parents share with the school an important responsibility in helping their children to achieve their maximum potential. Some of the ways in which parents can supplement and extend the school program are:

1. Encourage originality--help children make their own toys, projects, or models from wood, clay or other materials which may be available.

2. Encourage questions--help your children find books or other sources which can provide answers rather than attempting to answer all questions yourself.

3. Stimulate creative thinking and problem solving--encourage children to try out solutions without fear of making mistakes. Help them to value their own thinking, learn from their mistakes, and encourage them to try again.

4. Foster good work habits--help children to plan their work and then be sure they complete their plan. This applies to daily tasks at home and in the community as well as school work.

5. Share an interest in reading with your children--read to them and discuss with them books they are reading.

6. Find time for the family to talk together about many different things--help your children work toward expressing themselves better.

7. Take trips together to places of interest--to museums, exhibits, fairs, government and community agencies.

8. Encourage a variety of experiences--help your children to become interested in many activities and develop hobbies.

9. Allow for some free time--to encourage your child to wonder, to engage in reflective thought, and to appreciate the world around them.

10. Be a real companion to your children--explore and share each other's thinking. Enjoy your children and help them remember their childhood with pleasure.

Source Unknown

A LIST OF
ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

I. Expose your child to a variety of experiences by visiting and talking to different professionals.

Visit:

- museums
- libraries
- movies
- theater
- opera
- symphony
- concerts
- puppet shows
- gallery
- historical sites
- scenic sites
- church/synagogue
- aquarium
- botanical garden
- arboretum
- zoo
- parks
- sanctuary
- Audubon
- fisheries
- orchards
- amusement parks
- YM/WCA
- hands on museum
- auto dealerships
- cemetary
- gyms
- variety of sports
- crafts
- foundaries
- packaging
- fire station
- police station
- hospital
- airport
- bus station
- train station
- radio station
- television station
- telephone company
- telegraph company
- computer center
- stock market
- bank
- small business
- insurance company
- gas stations
- chemical plant
- manufacturer
- governmental agencies
- city hall
- congress
- senate
- treasury
- stores of different kinds
- restaurants
- planetarium
- sports arena
- variety of recreational activities
- ship yards
- winery
- bottling

Visit professionals in these areas:

- art
- architecture
- music
- performing arts
- design
- interior decorating
- appliance repair
- driving
- carpentry
- retail
- speech
- real estate
- secretarial
- industrial trade
- agriculture
- modeling
- horticulture
- communications
- heavy equipment
- electrical
- management
- reading

accounting
culinary arts
photography
mixology
aeronautical
geology
engineering
anthropology
history
nursing
dentistry
law
sports
forestry
cosmetology
language
oceanography
coast guard
fire
governmental
computer
refrigeration
printing
electronic
pharmaceutical
biology
sociology
paleology
religious
medicine
physical therapy
crafts
social work
veterinary
education
film making
manufacturing
police
beautician
public maintenance

(Glen, Valerie, Parent Packet for Gifted & Talented; Massachusetts State Department of Education, 1978)

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO ENRICHMENT EXPERIENCES FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

Certainly, it is a well known fact that some parents can, and do provide their children with enriching experiences such as private lessons, trips and exposure to a variety of art and cultural events; that other parents are unaware of or cannot afford to provide.

There are many activities that are available at no cost or at a nominal fee. This list was compiled to help parents who recognize silent potentials in their children and want to provide enriching and inexpensive experiences for them. Expose your child to a variety of experiences that don't necessarily require expense, but do require TIME, ENERGY, and PLANNING.

TIME - Your time is precious and so is your child's. The time devoted to providing your child with enriching experiences will be bountifully returned in many other ways. Do not begrudge the time spent. You may find it quite profitable yourself and a worthwhile experience especially since it will deepen your relationship with your child. Plan a time to spend on enriching activities and stick to it. Children, especially gifted and talented youngsters, are aware of their parents good intentions, but are more appreciative and respectful of parents who follow through with their intentions.

ENERGY - Energy is not so easily replenishable, but with proper planning you can arrive at a schedule that will meet your energy needs. For example, you recognize that you really only have enough energy to last three or four hours before you lose your enthusiasm, patience and perspective, so you plan accordingly. Be aware of your limitations and toleration levels.

PLANNING - Planning is an extremely important element in this undertaking. It involves: decision making, preparation, and research.

Decision making - The parent must decide with the child on what the activity will be, when it will be done, and the purpose for doing it. The parent should also decide on objectives for the activity, some general questions about things to look for, ask about, and think about.

Preparation - The parent should contact the place to visit and/or make the proper arrangements prior to the activity. The parent should contact the person in charge. The parent should plan to bring any needed supplies and equipment.

Research - Planning will also involve the parent doing some research on the topic, finding books, people to talk to, and/or other related information.

The steps in the planning stage will facilitate the execution of the activity and provide a much smoother activity while highlighting its essential elements.

EXECUTION - A business like process to such experiences will help the child profit from the activity. This does not mean that the child cannot enjoy the activity since part of the experience should be the pleasure of doing things together, sharing and learning together. During the activity the parent should encourage the child to ask questions, look at things from new and different perspectives, collect things, make observations, take notes or keep a journal.

CULMINATION - Some activities may ignite an idea or an interest in the child. Encourage the child to pursue the idea or interest through research, talking to resource people or contacting organizations for more information. The child may become totally absorbed in this interest. The parent should encourage the child to begin thinking as a professional thinks, doing what a professional does, and producing what a professional produces. The child's interest may end in a culminating product that will be profitable in many ways especially if it is shared with an intended audience. You will be helping the child to turn a learning experience into a real-life situation.

EVALUATION - The parent should get some indication from the child of the value of the activity. You may have to probe to get an accurate assessment. What did you like about that activity? Did you learn anything you didn't already know? The evaluation process will help you to assess other intended activities and can be used as a valuable guide for others to follow.

(Glen, Valerie, Parent Packet for Gifted & Talented; Massachusetts State Department of Education, 1978)

CREATIVITY IN THE HOME

WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Torrance's (1970) definition of creativity has wide currency in educational circles. He defines creativity as

> becoming sensitive to or aware of problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies and so on; bringing together available information; defining the difficulty or identifying the missing element; searching for solutions, making guesses or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies, testing and retesting these hypotheses and modifying and restating them; perfecting them and finally communicating the results. (p. 22)

HOW PARENTS CAN RECOGNIZE CREATIVE BEHAVIOR

Some indications:

*Tendency to challenge ideas of authorities ("Why do I have to go to school until I'm 15?")

*Eagerness to tell others about discoveries ("Guess what, guess what, guess what!")

*Showing relationships among apparently unrelated ideas ("Hey, Mom, your new hat looks just like a flying saucer.")

*Habit of guessing and testing outcomes ("I put detergent in the birdbath but no birds came to clean up. Can I try some bubble bath today?")

*Honesty and intense search for truth ("Mom, I hope this doesn't upset you, but I've come to the conclusion that there is no Tooth Fairy.")

*Boldness of ideas ("But I think that children should be allowed to vote.")

*Manipulation of ideas and objects to obtain new combinations ("I'm going to take this string and this pencil and make a compass.")

*Penetrating observations and questions ("When the snow melts, where does the white go?")

*Tendency to seek alternatives and explore new possibilities ("This old shoe would make a great flower pot.")

*Self-initiated learning ("Yesterday I went to the library and checked out all the books on dinosaurs.")

HOW A PARENT CAN HELP

*Provide materials that enrich imagery, such as fairy tales, folk tales, myths, fables, nature books.

*Permit time for thinking and daydreaming. Just because a child doesn't look like he's busy doesn't mean that his mind is not.

*Encourage children to record their ideas in binders, notebooks, and the like. Even playing secretary for your child by having him dictate his stories to you can be a special way of showing that his ideas are valuable and that you care about what he is thinking.

*Prize rather than punish true individuality. It is always possible to find little details about a child's work or behavior that might make him feel as though you noticed him as a special person.

*Be cautious in editing children's products. Sometimes a word corrected in the wrong place or too many times can stifle a child's creative energy and feeling of worth as a creator.

*Encourage children to play with words. Even in such common settings as a car ride or shopping trip, word games like rhyming, opposites, and puns can be used to their full advantage.

Source Unknown

HOME AS THE SPARK CENTER FOR CREATIVITY
by Tom Gnagey

No one knows how much creative talent is lost because it is not encouraged in the home. Individuals grow through experience. If they have opportunities for creative experiences and are encouraged to be creative they are more likely to manifest this ability. The mind has been compared to a computer in that the input determines the output to a considerable extent. The environment of the child (the input) includes the home, community, and school. Each of these can play a major role in either stimulating or depressing creative talent. If a rich environment encourages creative activity, the input is of high quality, and it is reasonable to assume that the output will result in better developed creative talent.

The extent and nature of the child's interests are largely determined by his home life; they are firmly rooted in his personality by the time he enters school. Parents can contribute to fostering the development of creative abilities in their progeny by giving recognition for creative achievements, showing an interest in their children's studies in science, and asking meaningful questions. Parents should realize that the behavior of creative children often does not follow the norm for their group. The creative individual, for example, may be much more interested in books than his peers, and parents can and should encourage such pursuits. Creative production comes from a prepared and enriched mind. The school obviously emphasizes learning from books, but if the home devalues reading it causes a serious conflict. Conflicts of this nature may arise particularly with the culturally deprived or in homes where the father is too concerned with athletics and scorns the bookish interest of his somewhat less-than athletic son. Many science-prone and creative children could never become great athletes because their inherited anatomical features prevent them from achieving excellence in the field. However, these same individuals might have assets of at least as great a value to society as athletic prowess--their creative potential.

Satisfaction of the curiosity so characteristic of the young is the greatest possible motivation for science learning. A child wants to know what, how, and why. He tastes, smells, looks at, listens to, and handles many things in order to feel at home with the objects that surround him. The child wants to know about the living things around him--trees, flowers, birds, dogs, cats, insects, turtles and snakes. A wide range of science experiences is available at home through the care of pets, gardening, and simple experiments involving food and household articles. Parents can encourage questions, frankly admit when they don't know the answers, and help the child to find the answers. At the same time, they should avoid giving him more information than he wants and be careful not to perpetuate superstitions or falsehoods, which could be worse than giving no answer at all.

Many important principles of science can be learned through play. A child is always eager to find out how his toys work. Some toys involve the use of gravity, magnetism, or friction. Others work by winding, pulling, or

compressing. As a young child plays in water he discovers that some things float and others do not. Water causes the bare floor to become slippery, thereby reducing friction. As the child grows and learns, each bit of information leading to concept development becomes a building block for further knowledge. Often children's play involves making something to demonstrate ideas of their own, and this may contribute to their growing interest in science.

To get an idea of the child's real interests, observe his unguarded moments. What does he do or say or read? Is he a collector, a fixer, a planner, a doubter? Is he curious--curious enough to tolerate failure to get answers? The school can supplement parents' observations with more concrete information about test scores, interest profiles, expressed occupational choices, and other records.

To encourage science interests effectively, the parent should know the child, know the school, and plan a variety of appropriate family activities. Parent support of the school program is a tremendous factor in shaping a positive attitude toward learning. The reverse--finding fault with the school--can provide a readymade excuse for a pupil's apathetic performance. Guided by the knowledge of the individual child and his science activities at school, parents can devise practical ways of encouraging rapport between youth and science.

1. Parents can surround the child with science-related books.

   a. Reading families have children who can and will read.
   b. The right book is a gift long remembered.
   c. Subscribe to science magazines in the name of the student.
   d. Provide him with his own bookshelves and books.
   e. Explore libraries and bookshops with him.

The home library will be a source of enjoyment and help to students during their school years and later. If parents want some assistance in selecting books and magazines on science, they can consult the science teacher and librarian. Good lists are available in school and public libraries, and newspapers and magazines review books for all ages.

2. Parents can plan a wide range of experiences.

   a. In family discussion or "table-talk" listen to questions and ask questions on science topics. Game-fashion, demand the "the evidence, please" as a substitute for hearsay and irrational argument.
   b. Take the children to museums, nature centers and trails, zoos, laboratories, planetariums and observatories, aquariums, parks, wildlife sanctuaries, communication centers, water and power plants, construction projects, weather stations, airports, and harbors.
   c. Include children, when appropriate, in activities such as science lectures, exhibits, conventions, nature walks, science club programs, summer institutes.
   d. Permit a space at home for workbench, a darkroom, a chemistry lab, a growing plot.
   e. Support hobbies with your time and with money for cameras, barometers, microscopes, models, science kits. Find time to work together on projects.

f. Encourage membership in 4-H clubs, science clubs, electronics clubs, hobby clubs, photography clubs, junior science societies, nature clubs, and scouting.
g. Plan vacations--camps, jobs, courses, travel--to include seashore, mountains, desert, and other regions that will expand geographic and geological experiences.

Know the boy or girl, encourage some action in the light of this knowledge, and praise all efforts. Only in an atmosphere of sympathetic understanding can parents foster a maturing interest in science.

-- Mr. Gnagey is a school psychologist in the Ottawa (Illinois) elementary schools.

ARE YOU A GIFTED PARENT?

1. Do you answer your child's questions with patience and good humor?
2. Do you take advantage of his questions and expressions of interest to guide him into further learning and explorations?
3. Do you help him develop physical and social skills as carefully as you encourage mental growth?
4. Do you help him learn how to get along with children of all levels of intelligence?
5. Do you avoid comparing him with his brothers and sisters or his companions?
6. Do you show him that he is loved for his own sake and not for his intellectual achievement?
7. Do you set reasonable standards of behavior for your child and then see that he meets them?
8. Do you provide early opportunities for decision making by your child, with follow-up of learning to evaluate decisions after carrying out whatever action was taken?
9. Do you try to find something specific to praise when he shows you his work? (A generalized compliment means little to gifted children.)
10. Do you help him find worthwhile and challenging reading materials and television programs?
11. Do you provide hobby materials and books?
12. Do you find places where he can study and work at his hobbies?
13. Do you provide a place to display his work?
14. Do you let him learn about and share in some of your hobbies and interests?
15. Do you take him on trips to points of interest?
16. Do you enable him to take advantage of lessons and activities offered by private groups or community organizations?
17. Do you teach him how to budget his time, organize his work, and improve his study habits?
18. Do you help him make his own plans and decisions?
19. Do you give him increasing independence as his ability to handle responsibility increases?

20. Do you give him household responsibilities and other tasks suitable to his age level?

21. Do you avoid overstressing intellectual achievements?

22. Do you avoid pushing him by not being unreasonably demanding about after-school lessons or activities?

23. Do you resist the impulse to show him off?

24. Do you resist any temptation to exploit him?

25. Do you teach him to use his gifts for the benefit of society as well as for himself?

26. Do you encourage him to set high educational and vocational goals?

27. Do you refrain from trying to pick his vocation for him, but try to help him learn about as many occupations as possible?

28. Do your expressions of attitude and your behavior set the example you want him to follow?

29. Do you speak as properly as you want him to?

Questions taken from "A Guide for Parents...Mentally Gifted Children and Youth" - Bureau of Special and Compensatory Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1973.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS OF ABLE CHILDREN

J. C. Gowan
California State University, Northridge

1. They are still children. They need love but controls; attention but discipline; parental involvement, yet training in self-dependence and responsibility.

2. Consonance of parental value systems is important for their optimum development. This means that there should not be wide disagreements over values between parents.

3. Parental involvement in early task demands, such as training them to perform tasks themselves, to count, tell time, use correct vocabulary and pronunciation, locate themselves, and get around their neighborhood, do errands and be responsible are all important.

4. Emphasis on early verbal expression, reading, discussing ideas in the presence of children, poetry and music are all valuable. Parents should read to children. There should be an emphasis by parents on doing well in school.

5. The lack of disruption of family life through divorce or separation, and the maintenance of a happy, healthy home is an important aspect in raising able children, as well as other children.

6. Since able children often have vague awareness of adult problems such as sex, death, sickness, finances, war, etc., which their lack of experience makes them unable to solve, they may need reassurance in these areas.

7. Parents can see to it that the gifted child age six or above has a playmate who is as able, even if he has to be "imported" from some distance.

8. The role of good books, magazines and other aids to home learning, such as encyclopedias, charts, collections, etc., is important.

9. Parents should take the initiative in taking able children to museums, art galleries, educational institutions and other historical places where collections of various sorts may enhance background learning.

10. Parents should be especially careful not to "shut up" the gifted child who asks questions. In particular, he should not be scolded for asking, nor should it be inferred that this is an improper or forbidden subject. The parent may, however, insist that questions not be asked at inappropriate times, and he may require the child to sharpen or rephrase his question so as to clarify it. Sometimes questions should not be answered completely, but the reply

should itself be a question which sends the child into some larger direction. When the parent cannot answer the question, he should direct the child to a resource that can. Sometimes questions call for clarification of concepts, as with the young child who asked, "Why aren't all those rockets liable to shoot down God?"

11. There's a difference between pushing and intellectual stimulation. Parents should avoid "pushing" a child into reading, "exhibiting" him before others or courting undue publicity about him. On the other hand, parents should seek in every way to stimulate and widen the child's mind, through suitable experiences in books, recreation, travel and the arts.

12. The gifted child usually has a wide and versatile range of interests, but he may be somewhat less able to concentrate on one area for a long time. Parents should encourage children who have hobbies to follow through on them, to plan and strive for creditable performance and for real mastery, rather than "going through" a lot of hobbies or collections in a short time.

13. Parents should avoid direct, indirect or unspoken attitudes that fantasy, originality, unusual questions, imaginary playmates, or out-of-ordinary mental processes on the part of the child are bad, "different" or to be discouraged. Instead of laughing at the child, laugh with him and seek to develop his sense of humor.

14. Parents should avoid overstructuring children's lives so that they don't have any free time. Sometimes parents are concerned that gifted children spend some time in watching TV or reading comic books. While they should not spend all their time in doing so, they cannot be expected to perform at top capacity at all times.

15. Respect the child and his knowledge, which at times may be better than your own and impatient of authority. Assume he means to do right, and the deviations are not intentional. Do not presume on your authority as a parent except in crises. Allow much liberty on unimportant issues. Try to give him general instructions to carry out in his way rather than specific commands to carry out in yours.

16. Gifted children are sometimes impatient of conventions. Have a frank talk with your child about the importance of conventions, such as driving on the right hand side, where he can see the social advantages, and then point out that other conventions of politeness, manners, courtesy and regard for others have similar bases in experiences.

17. Whenever possible talk things out with him where there has been a disciplinary lapse. He is much more amenable to rational argument than are many children and usually has a well developed sense of duty.

18. Give him the stimulation of private lessons in some skill in which he excels. See that he has social membership in worthy groups. Foster special experiences outside the home by his traveling alone, or visiting friends overnight. Try to facilitate his chance to talk alone with an adult authority in some line that interests him.

19. Try to improve his sense of taste in mass media, TV, radio, cinema, newspapers, comics, reading, art, etc. Discuss the basis for taste and give him some experience with new forms of expression in the arts.

20. Take time to be with him, to listen to what he has to say, to discuss ideas with him.

21. Be a good example yourself, and try to find worthy adult model figures of both sexes outside his family for him to know.

22. Support the school efforts to plan for able children. Help to interest the PTA in the problem. Support study groups on gifted children. Form with other parents into cooperative endeavors.

23. Investigate scholarship programs of your community for other gifted children and help provide them.

24. Work to provide better community understanding of, and appreication of, the role of the able child in society and the importance of community planning.

25. Support community action for able children, including bonds and school taxes for extra educational advantages. Advocate more guidance and special education for the gifted.

III

PARENTS AS PARTNERS WITH SCHOOLS

SMITH FAMILY
by Mr. & Mrs. George Smith
I HAD AN INSATIABLE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.
TREMENDOUS CURIOUSITY, VORACIOUS NEED TO SOLVE, DECODE, INTERPRET.
MY INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM WERE UNBOUNDED FOR EACH LITTLE GLIMMER OF LIGHT.
I WANTED TO FIND MEANING, RELEVANCE. WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?
I COULDN'T LEARN ENOUGH. I WAS ENTHRALLED. WHY? WHY? WHY?
ENCHANTED FASCINATED! WANTED TO SOLVE EVERY MYSTERY!
WANTED TO LEARN. NEEDED TO KNOW.
BUT THEY SENT ME TO SCHOOL.

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS.

State of Iowa
Department of Public Instruction
Curriculum Division
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

IT'S OK

The "OK" List for Gifted Students*

____ It is "OK" to include kindergarten students who are reading at primary levels in primary reading groups.

____ It is "OK" to let students pursue individual interests even though they are not related to the content being covered at the time.

____ It is "OK" for a student at one grade level to be in the same class with a student from another grade level.

____ It is "OK" for a gifted high school student to take college courses while still in high school.

____ It is "OK" for a gifted student to help the teacher plan his course of study.

____ It is "OK" to expand the curriculum either vertically or horizontally for gifted students.

____ It is "OK" to have special groups for gifted students. (Eg., mini-courses for the gifted, resource groups, etc.)

____ It is "OK" for gifted students to move as rapidly as they are able through routine subject matter material within the regular classroom situations.

____ It is "OK" for gifted students to work independently, for extended periods of time, if that particular learning style is best suited for them.

____ It is "OK" to accelerate a gifted student or double promote him. However, planning should assume that gifted students do not miss large blocks of essential skills.

____ It is "OK" for gifted students not to make up all work missed in their regular classes while they are attending special classes or working on independent projects.

____ It is "OK" for teachers of the gifted to be participants in learning activities rather than directors of them.

____ It is "OK" to let gifted students share the responsibility for the evaluation of their work in school.

____ It is "OK" to recognize the fact that students learn outside as well as in school and provide as many experiences as possible for this type of education.

____ It is "OK" for teachers of the gifted to stress the process of learning in their classes more than the product of learning.

____ It is "OK" to involve a gifted student's parents in planning a suitable program for their child. It is also "OK" to visit with his parents to determine what kinds of experiences they are providing at home and how the school can tie into those experiences.

*Prepared by John Dudley, Coordinator, Programs for Gifted, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, Nebraska

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND YOUR GIFTED CHILD

Parents of gifted children, like any other parents, constantly face questions regarding school and home practices. Many of their questions come from trying to decide whether a given school offering will benefit or harm their child. Often they have remained uneasy with decisions they made. Questions on whether they should encourage or discourage certain activities, how they handle uneven abilities within the family, and others plague them. Often, action cannot be postponed.

The questions which follow have been gleaned from contacts with many parents, both individually and in groups. They represent many of those most commonly asked. The brief responses are given as suggestions rather than as complete answers, since responses to cover all of the possible ramifications would be voluminous, if not impossible. The questions are regarded as a framework for discussion and further amplification, perhaps in parent study groups.

How can I tell if a program is good?

A program that is good should cause the child to be eager to go to school. He should carry his interests into the home through discussions, through voluntary search for added information, through voiced enthusiasm. The content he is using should be at an appropriately challenging level.

How do you handle the older children when this one seems to know more than the rest?

Avoid comparison. Comparison invites competition. Evenly distributed love and affection, and recognition for various accomplishments of different kinds will let each child know that he is valued for himself. If questions arise, discuss them in the context of each person's being especially good at something; one child likes books, another one art, another is especially good at sports or music, cooking, helping others, or whatever particular contribution the individuals can make. Some learn earlier, others take a little longer; the use made of any learning for worthwhile contributions is the important thing.

What can you do with a child who is a perfectionist and becomes discouraged?

Often gifted children will tackle topics which are so general that they are unable to handle them. They then become frustrated as they attempt to complete their studies. Parents can help by discussing

with them their projected plans and by assisting them to choose realistically. For example, when a child announces that he is going to study the Civil War and make a report on it, the parent may ask what particular aspect of the Civil War? Or he may suggest scanning a book on the Civil War to choose among a number of topics and issues. The child should make the choice, however. Encouragement, support, and parent expectation that the child will do a worthy piece of work are helpful, but the expectations must be realistic.

Should a program be for gifted children generally, or just for those with a scientific bent?

A good program should be flexible enough to meet the needs of all gifted and talented children. Any group of gifted children is extremely diverse in interests, abilities, and talents. This population is the most complex of any. Educational planning should be highly individualized to meet the diverse abilities of the gifted, whether in science, the arts, social sciences, or elsewhere.

Many gifted children are in fact interested in science and mathematics because of their fondness for system and logic, and if their real interests lie here, they should not be discouraged. But neither should children with primary interests and talents elsewhere be forced to concentrate heavily in the sciences.

Should I permit my child to attend a special class?

This question usually is based on fear that a child will develop feelings of superiority, or on fear that he will be punished by others who are not in a special group. Membership in a good special class can be beneficial in several ways: (1) The content is likely to be more relevant to the child's interests and abilities than in a regular class; (2) the child may learn that there are other children whose abilities are as high or higher than his and thus may develop a wholesome respect for others and a sense of humility regarding himself; (3) he is able to work with others who understand and respect him; (4) he is likely to relate to others with similar interests and to develop new interests, and (5) he is more likely to have a teacher who has some special interest in and preparation for teaching the gifted.

Is there danger in putting too much pressure on young gifted children too soon?

When pressure is self-imposed in the sense that children are intrigued with a problem and want to find out all they can, pressure is enjoyable. In an unpublished study we conducted on this question, more than two hundred gifted children at various grade levels reported that they enjoyed the experiences in special programs of being able to delve into topics in depth, without restriction, and they enjoyed using their minds fully. Self-imposed pressure can produce great satisfaction in a task well done. Harmful pressure may also operate when the gifted child is pressured to conform to the middle-ground and to be average.

How can we prevent negative feelings in others toward our child's being identified as "gifted"?

Avoid discussion of the fact with others. The knowledge is important to you and the teacher in understanding the child and in working with him appropriately. No useful purpose is served by overt pride in the "chip off the old block." Children should be valued as children, not as labels, nor should they be used for the satisfaction of adult needs. Parents who boast about their child over the back fence guarantee resentment and hostility.

If remarks are made by adults, it is good to counter with, "We know that he is bright. We don't talk about it because we don't want him to feel that his IQ is our source of pride. We want to bring him up so that he can use his ability constructively as an adult."

When classmates or other children make remarks, a parent has an indication that the matter should be discussed with the teacher. No child wants to live under a label, including the gifted.

Is it good for a child to know he is gifted?

Most gifted children know that they achieve better than others although occasional children may feel vaguely different and even suffer from inferiority complexes. Gifted children generally can be expected to meet reasonable demands and can be asked to work out real-life problems with adults with the comment that they are bright and can. The child who feels inferior may require special counseling. In most cases, gifted children do not need any special interpretation or discussion of their abilities. Any such discussion may be useful when a plan for a special remedial program with a tutor is outlined (as with a child who requires special help in mathematics), or when a student is discussing college and career alternatives.

Should we go to our child's counselors for help?

Yes. After they have identified the gifted children in a school, some counselors have a conference with each child and his parents or you can arrange one. Both counselor and parent should try to see things through the child's eyes. It is also important for parents to understand their own feelings and the reasons why they behave as they do toward their gifted children. Thus they will avoid the two extremes: exploiting their gifted children, or neglecting to give them the education and encouragement they need.

I heard that IQ tests are inaccurate. What do they actually measure?

The individual IQ test is the best measure of potential that we have at present. Group IQ tests are much less accurate and are the most commonly used in schools because they are less expensive. The individual examination gives a fairly reliable picture of how well a child

will perform academically in relation to others of his age. It does not measure personal factors which are also important in achievement. It also may be unfair to a child from a markedly different background.

How do I know if he is working up to capacity?

If his expected achievement and actual achievement are fairly equivalent, he is. These would be measured through population norms from standardized tests rather than through teacher-made tests. Another index, though informal, may be the type and extent of reading and interests. It is important to remember that "working up to capacity" is something that very few adults do and that a child needs time for childhood.

I want him to be happy and well-adjusted. Will this program make him one-sided?

The meaning of happiness and good adjustment varies with individuals. The right of a person to be himself is paramount. A good program should be so designed that the child derives a great deal of satisfaction from his interests. If he specializes early, this is not necessarily a cause for concern. Harvey Lehman pointed out that many of the important contributions to mankind were made by persons still in their teens. Sidney Pressey wrote extensively on the same topic. For some persons, the work in which they are interested is so fascinating and satisfying that the work itself is recreational, and conflicting social or play activities are a nuisance. It is important, therefore, to look at a child, his attitudes toward himself, and his attitudes toward others. If the child is apparently one with a healthy self-regard and is able to relate to others satisfactorily, his desire to pursue interests intensively and/or to specialize early should not be denied. Gifted children often do this.

What kind of vocational information should I give him?

Gifted children have more complicated vocational choice problems than others simply because they face a bewildering array of thousands of potential occupations, most of which they could master successfully. Many gifted persons do have vocational problems, chiefly of underplacement in unchallenging jobs. Many schools and colleges have vocational counselors who also have specialized in scholarship possibilities. These persons should be consulted. It is possible, also, through arrangements by either school or parent groups, to give gifted children opportunities for work experience with adults in their fields of interest. Parents can be of substantial help to their children in simply supporting their right to an occupational decision. For example, if a young person has marked talent in musical composition and wishes to work in that field, he should be allowed that right rather than be prodded to enter some "safe" and lucrative field. The influence of teachers who exploit the multiple

talents of gifted young people by recruiting them into their own fields or who denigrate the interests of the gifted should be counterbalanced by discussions at home.

Will she maintain her giftedness?

Giftedness is maintained and enhanced if the environment is rich with opportunities. Giftedness can diminish, and outward evidence of giftedness can disappear in a sterile environment. We found a slight rise in measured ability among children who lived in a particularly desirable home-school environment. Some studies have shown that children of poverty who attend poor schools lose in measured ability as they grow older. Women, who in the past have encountered less opportunity for continuing learning than men, have shown some loss in ability from childhood to middle adulthood although this is less true at the present time. Parents who continue their own interest in learning are good examples for their children and probably are more interesting companions to them as well.

ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENTS TO FAIL

By

Tom Gnagey

Our world today is thirsty for new ideas. It's hard to imagine a world without wheels, isn't it? Yet at one time in man's history no one had ever had the idea of a wheel. It was not too long ago, either, that no one had yet thought of the printing press, the internal combustion engine, the electric light, allowances for children, planting oriental soybeans in central Illinois, the skateboard, the Monkees, or teacher retirement plans. These were all brand new ideas that once upon a time someone thought up for the first time.

What connection is there between having new ideas and encouraging failure? In this age of scientific discovery, social upheaval, and intellectual competition between nations, one of the greatest needs of our country is for young minds who think experimentally and who can generate important new ideas. To develop these creative thinking skills, children must be allowed very early to try out their ideas--even those that Dad, Mom and teacher know in advance will fail. If a child is not allowed this freedom to fail, and if he is taught that failing is bad, he will not take the risk of thinking creatively. Because in such thinking looms a constant threat of failure.

If a baseball player never swung his bat at a pitched ball, he would never hit one. Some children are so afraid they will miss the ball and be laughed at that they are not able to swing the bat. They never miss the ball; they never hit a home run, either. They are afraid to try because they are afraid to fail.

A lot of children learn early through experiences at home and at school that they get into less trouble if they just don't try new things. One afternoon in the park, I saw a father with his two-year-old son. When the boy tried to climb on a picnic table, his father stopped him. "You'll just get hurt. Don't try such things!" Then the tot started to climb the ladder to the slide. He was whisked away from that, too. "You just can't do things like that, you'll get hurt and Daddy and Mamma will feel bad," the man scolded.

You can bet this boy soon learned that his father showed him love and appreciation only when he was not trying out new things and experimenting with his world. In short, the boy learned that he was "good" only when he stuck to and succeeded at the same old things, those his father approved; that he was "bad" when he tried anything new, and failed.

Children who learn that it is bad or weak to fail stop trying, and are thereby shut off from the most fascinating and adventure-filled part of being: reaching for new horizons.

Many new ideas will not work. Many new ideas will be laughed at by people who themselves do not feel free to risk failure. Many ideas we think are new have already been tried by others. In short, many if not most new ideas will be failures. Therefore, unless children are able and willing to risk failure they cannot be free enough to enter the world of new ideas.

Just as children learn that it is good and proper to succeed, they must also learn that it is good and proper to fail. In fact, to achieve the personal freedom necessary to learn and to use the learning creatively, it is more important that a child learn the appropriateness of failure.

Children have lots of new ideas. But often they are afraid to try them out because parents or teachers have--by word or deed--made fun of their mistakes and their "stupid" questions. We must guard against ever making fun of anything a child tries, says, thinks, or asks. When we do, we are teaching that it is bad to fail, and we are killing a little part of that child's ability and desire to create.

We must spend whatever amount of time and effort is necessary to help our children and students grow up unafraid of failure. We must build in them a determination to hear and ponder any new idea--whether their own or someone else's--and then to make a realistic evaluation of its worth. Indeed we must encourage children to try new things by our own eager willingness to consider and discuss new ideas.

Finally, we must take whatever steps are necessary to instill in each child a pride in himself as a thinker. We must help children learn there is nothing wrong with good honest failure, well used.

--Mr. Gnagey is a school psychologist in the Ottawa (Illinois) elementary schools.

Partnership in Program for Gifted (Parent/Community Resources)

Author: Ginsburg, Gina

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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IV

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Beck, Joan
How to Raise a Brighter Child: The Case for Early Learning - A guide to the methods by which a child can be taught at his/her own style and speed in the early years. Translates recent research on the growth of children's intelligence during the first six years of life into a form useful to parents of young children. (Simon & Schuster; N.Y.), 1967

Burns, Marilyn
I Am Not A Short Adult! Getting Good at Being a Kid - A Brown Paper School Book dealing with various aspects of childhood including family, school, money, legal rights, TV and movies, body language, and generally, how to make the most of childhood right now. (Little Brown & Co.; Boston), 1977

Coffrey, Kay, et al.
Parentspeak on Gifted and Talented Children - A book for parents of gifted/talented children by parents of gifted/talented children. Covers topics of special interest to parents: community opposition to gifted/talented education; organization strategies; helpful hints on dealing with a gifted youngster. (Ventura County Superintendent of Schools; Ventura, Calif.), 1976

Deakin, Michael
Children on the Hill, The: One Family's Bold Experiment with a new way of learning and growing - An explanation of an uneducated Welsh couple who created a home environment and system of child rearing based largely on the Montassori system in order to nurture learning and creativity in their four children. This study points out how the young children's gifts are blossoming in the atmosphere of exceptional freedom and their moral development is unlike that of most of their contemporaries. (Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc.; N.Y.), 1972

Delp, Jeanne, and Martinson, Ruth
A Handbook for Parents of Gifted and Talented (Also Helpful for Educators) - A handbook consisting of answers to questions often asked by the parent(s) of a gifted child. Deals with traits, identification, case studies, names and addresses of persons/agencies/programs to contact, and suggestions for organizing a parent association. (Ventura County Superintendent of Schools; Ventura, Calif.), 1977

ERIC Report #84726
A Handbook for Parents - The handbook for parents of children in the mentally gifted minor program of Oceanside, California, explains the district plan, selection of students, classroom activities, and the parent role. Also noted are program purposes, program organization, instructional materials, special interests of pupils, special activities parents can provide, organizations concerned with the gifted, and a bibliography. 1971

ERIC Report #82428
Mentally Gifted Children and Youth: A Guide for Parents - The brochure is intended to help parents understand and aid their gifted children in home, school, and community. Gifted children are defined, needs are presented, and the role of parents in motivating their gifted child and helping the schools is discussed.

Ginsberg, Gina and Harrison, Charles H.
How to Help Your Gifted Child: A Handbook for Parents and Teachers - A "how to" book for parents and teachers for building an effective parents' organization on behalf of gifted education. Also includes a description of the development of The Gifted Child Society's Saturday Workshops (an extensive enrichment program). (Monarch Press, Simon & Schuster; N.Y.), 1977

Gowan, John C. and Bruch, Catherine B.
The Academically Talented Student and Guidance - The Monograph is directed toward providing guidance personnel with conceptions and approaches useful in working with gifted individuals. Addresses topics such as: characteristics, identification, guidance problems, creativity and mental health, and disadvantaged gifted. (Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston), 1971

Gowan, John C. and Torrance, E. Paul
Educating the Ablest - A book of readings on the education of gifted children covering the following topics: Developmental Characteristics, Program, Curriculum, Outside the Classroom, Guidance Identification and Evaluation, Teachers, Parents, Creativity, Disadvantaged Gifted Youth, and Mental Health. (F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.; Illinois), 1971

Kanizher, Herbert
Everyday Enrichment for Gifted Children at Home and School - A resource book of activities that focus on the process of learning/thinking. Encourages parents to explore the community with their gifted child. Covers areas of art, geography, reading/language, math, music, and science. (N/S LTI on G/T; Los Angeles, Calif.), 1977

Kaufmann, Felice
Your Gifted Child and You - A booklet to help parents and teachers better identify and interpret outstanding potential in their children. Also suggests ways to help adults to help their child develop to potential. Strategies for working with the schools are suggested. (Council for Exceptional Children; Reston, VA), 1976

Khatena, Joe
The Creatively Gifted Child: Suggestions for Parents and Teachers - This book for parents and teachers is designed to help those adults to recognize and identify creatively gifted children through testing and then to develop their intellectual potential. Discusses changing concepts of intelligence, measurement of creative thinking abilities, activities to stimulate creative thinking, etc. (Vantage Press, Inc.; N.Y.), 1978

Ross, Alan O.
The Exceptional Child in the Family - Written for the professionals who will deal with the parents of an exceptional child, this book offers general principles which apply to understanding and helping a family, no matter what the unusual condition of the child. (Grune & Stratton; N.Y.), 1964

ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Project PRISM
37 West Main Street
Norton, MA 02766 (617-285-3718)

The Massachusetts Association for the Advancement of
Individual Potential
Box 65
Milton Village, MA 02187

The Association for the Gifted
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Office of Gifted & Talented
6th and D St., S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20202

PERIODICALS

The Gifted Child Quarterly
1426 Southwind
Westlake Village, CA 91361

Gifted/Creative/Talented Children
P.O. Box 66654
Mobile, AL 36606

Journal for the Education of the Gifted
Room 103
Ruffner Hall
School of Education
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Teaching Gifted Children
Croft - NEI
24 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06386

National/State Leadership Training Institute - Gifted/Talented
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
535 East Main Street
Ventura, CA 93009

Roeper Review:
A Journal on Gifted Child Education
Roeper City and Country School
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013